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The John Muir Newsletter, Winter 2002/2003

The John Muir Center for Environmental Studies

THE JOHN MUIR NEWSLETTER

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC, STOCKTON, CA

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 1 WINTER 2002/03

"GO TO THE MOUNTAINS!"

Helen Hunt Jackson

by Bonnie Johanna Gisel

Helen Hunt Jackson, poet, author of *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (1881) and *Ramona: A Story* (1884), and Special Commissioner to the "Mission Indians" of southern California (1883), wrote to her friend Jeanne C. Carr and to John Muir in 1885. She was seeking a place in the mountains of California where she could rest and recover from an illness. Thought to be malarial fever, Jackson actually had cancer. This she did not know. Jackson sought that which homeopathy was unable to provide with a therapeutic regimen of minute doses of medication and contact with nature where human spirit melded into nature's consciousness. Perhaps Jackson had read the poem composed by Charles Warren Stoddard, literary friend of Jeanne Carr. In wilderness, indeed, she would be cleansed.

Come from the vale of grief,
O, Pilgrim, I implore thee. Let me tell
How I have sought and found my full relief;
For Nature loves us well.

Look at thine own disgrace,
O, foolish Pilgrim, fainting in thy soul;
Let but the sweet air breath upon thy face,
And it shall make thee whole.

Bare thy close-shodden feet;
Put off thy raiment,; naked, free, and glad,
Walk with the shining angels Light and Heat,
For thou art fitly clad.

Bathe in the running tide;
O, seek it with a lover's heart; for lo!
Thou shalt arise from out it purified,
And whiter than the snow.

Pause in the orchard-path;
Pluck from the boughs the fruit's untainted flesh;
Eat freely, for a copious store it hath;
Then live and love

Seek thou the ocean's flood,
And, as the sun glows on the crystal brink,
Seize thou the golden chalice of his blood,
And thirsting, deeply drink.

Through Nature art thou blessed;
She clothes thee and she feeds thee, and she gives
Drink to the lips that thirst, and perfect rest
To every one that lives![1]

When Jackson wrote to Carr and to Muir for advice about convalescing in the mountains she was relying on homeopathy still. In 1872, diagnosed with bronchial catarrh (the inflammation of the respiratory tract

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Actor who plays environmental pioneer takes role as politician

According to San Francisco *Chronicle* staff writer, Carl T. Hall, Lee Stetson, a onetime Los Angeles actor and playwright who has made a career out of portraying John Muir for visitors to Yosemite National Park, began an unlikely new role in January as perhaps the best-known environmentalist in the Sierra Nevada to hold political office.

A lifelong Democrat and walking encyclopedia of Muir's life and lore, Stetson was elected to the Mariposa County Board of Supervisors in November, 2002, defeating Republican Candy O'Donel-Brown, a longtime ally of the Mariposa business community.

Thousands of people have seen Stetson's one-man performances in Yosemite Valley, where the plays have been staged five nights a week during the peak summer season. He has occupied the Muir character virtually full-time since 1982. That was the year of Stetson's first summer in the Sierra and the time when he wrote his first Muir script, "Conversations With A Tramp."

With his long white beard and serious mien, Stetson, 62, seems to look more like Muir every year, especially when wearing a hat to hide his un-Muirian baldness. But the actor insists he is a Muir scholar, not a clone, promising to be his own man while serving a district that includes the El Portal, Midpines and Foresta communities as well as a wide swath of Muir's beloved Yosemite backcountry.

"Muir was nearly saintly in his behavior and demeanor," Stetson said during his first interview since he moved into his new office. "I wouldn't claim any saintly qualities."

Besides, he added, the founding president of the Sierra Club "Loathed political life," although he consorted with politicians and famously battled against the construction of O'Shaughnessy Dam in order to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Muir lost that one. The valley became a reservoir to provide water for San Francisco. Now, a campaign has begun to restore Hetch Hetchy — a cause Stetson has supported with benefit performances.

The reservoir is located in Tuolumne County, however, and so Stetson figures Hetch Hetchy will not be an issue in his new $33,000-a-year post. Instead, he said he intends to focus on such matters as a new county general plan, a local housing shortage and health care needs of his constituents.

The grand issues of the modern environmental movement are fought on other stages, Stetson insisted.

"I have not been terribly active in the Hetch Hetchy campaign, other than some fund- raising and benefits," he said.

Most of his other projects, including his acting career, will be set aside so he can concentrate on Mariposa County affairs. Performances will continue, but on a reduced schedule. "Being a supervisor is a very demanding job, absolutely full time," he said.

Stetson was born in Massachusetts and raised in a strong union household. He earned a master's degree in American Studies at the University of Hawaii, and professes a lifelong interest in politics and history. But he gave up all his other plans when the acting bug bit him in his youth.

His swearing-in . . . and his first board meeting mark Stetson's maiden voyage into government office. Although his name is fairly well-known, many local residents, including Mariposa business owners, seem a bit unsure what to make of him yet.

. . . . Mariposa real estate broker and restaurateur Gene Mickle, a loquacious, self-described "red-neck" Republican who said he voted for Stetson's opponent, gives him the benefit of the doubt.

"I think maybe his outstanding trait is his willingness to listen," Mickle said.

At the Sierra Club's regional headquarters in Sacramento, Carl Zachella, staff director, said Stetson's new calling "will help bring some real balance to local government and a perspective that should be welcomed' in the Sierra county.

"Local governments have an understandable tendency to want to maximize the economic benefits of whatever local resources they have," Zachella said. "Lee Stetson really understands why this area is so unique and so precious. If there is any living person who understands how John Muir felt about the Sierra and Yosemite National Park, it's Lee Stetson."

Driving back from a restaurant his first day in office, Stetson had to wait a while for traffic to clear at a newly installed stop sign at the intersection of Highways 49 and 140. The big fear around here, he said, is that the new stop signs will soon morph into traffic lights.

There is still not a single traffic light in Mariposa County. Despite the battles for and against growth, he said most people, of all political persuasions, would just as soon keep traffic lights as far away as possible.

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Meeting John Muir

by Dennis Williams

While entrained en route to or returning from Wisconsin in later life, John Muir traveled across the southern plains and commented on the agave and sage. He didn't leap from the train and exult in the glory of gently rolling plains, the huge expanse of sky dotted with cumulus clouds, or in watching for hours a big thunderstorm miles away building in power and majesty and sweeping across the shortgrass prairie scattering lightening, dropping tornados, and leaving the ground white with hail. The plains affected Muir little, at least that he recorded, and for the most part the plains forgot that he had been there. But Muir and the Sierra Nevada go together. People in love with the Range of Light meet John Muir and find empathy with him because they and he share a love of the Sierra. For a flatland cotton farmer's son who had never seen a glacier nor any evidence of one, who had never been west of New Mexico or north of Kansas City, whose experience of southern culture came from the Red River bottom lands of East Texas; for whom the most frequent and loved trees were two-seeded junipers, pinyon pines, and mesquite, John Muir was nobody. His landscape was foreign. Yet, his enthusiasm for it was not. My chance encounter with John Muir significantly shaped my life's work. Not only has Muir been a significant object of study, but also an important mentor to me as I strive to fulfill my life's calling.

I met John Muir in graduate school. Through a class with Dan Flores, at that time Texas Tech University's environmental historian, I found a field of history I could appreciate. Environmental history connected people with nature in the past. My grandparents' generation had pioneered farms in the Texas panhandle and only a few years of ranching separated them from the Comanche who had ruled my part of the southern plains. I had picked up their arrow points, or those of their predecessors. I had roamed the ranch lands of the rolling plains hunting deer and fishing for catfish in dirt stock ponds. I had camped in New Mexico's Jicarrilla range since before I can remember. I knew from the experience of my childhood and youth that the natural world held mystery and contentment for those who walked in it with open eyes. Now, through environmental history I had found a discipline, a profession, uniting my intellectual, emotional, and physical predilections.

Finding a field to study is one thing, working in the field another. I began working on my master's thesis. Optimistically, I hoped to work on a project that would make a real contribution to the field. Initially, one or two topics failed to pan out, and Dan Flores sent me Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*. I was fascinated by the bits and pieces of Muir's language that Nash quoted. Something seemed out of place though. In my mind, Muir's words failed to support Nash's contention that Muir had rejected the faith of his father(s) for the pantheistic worship of Nature. I found myself later reading Frederick Badè's *Life and Letters*, Muir's *Thousand Mile Walk*, Linnie Wolfe's *Son of the Wilderness* and then recent Muir biographers, Fox and Cohen and Turner. With each I became more entranced with Muir and more convinced that there was something more to his environmental ethos that had so far been fleshed out. Impetuously perhaps, I set out to demonstrate that in fact Muir had held on to the faith of his fathers. Ron Limbaugh and Richard Cartwright Austin had begun excavating elements of Muir's Christian heritage; and the more I read Muir, the more convinced I became that Muir's appreciation for nature and in fact his life's work revolved around a commitment to seeing nature in its traditional role as secondary and supplementary revelation of God. I dug into the context of Muir's religious tradition and discovered that the American religious tradition was much more complex than the textbooks and period surveys allowed. Texas Tech University's Southwest Collection purchased what at the time was the new microfilm edition of the Muir Papers. I immersed myself in them and read practically every extant Muir scribble. I had to get glasses that year. Over the past fifteen years, I have attended Muir conferences and found encouragement in the words and deeds of Ron Limbaugh, Janene Ford, and Daryl Morrison. I developed fruitful relationships (at least on my part) with folks such as Bonnie Gisel and Michael Cohen. Studying one of the important founders of American preservationism, I found, was a worthy and fulfilling project.

More important than the development of my career from grad student to environmental historian has been the important influence of Muir's vision of nature on my own activities. While I had always appreciated natural environments as a place of refuge and spiritual awareness, I decided that getting to know Muir's physical world was important to understanding the object of my study. My wife and I trekked to California and camped in Yosemite. On subsequent trips, I met folks who introduced me to Douglas Fir and Jeffrey Pine and showed me real glacial stria, parts of Muir's world that I had previously known only through books. I also began taking students along on treks to some of my favorite places. Several times, I loaded them into a van and toured them through Indian Country, introducing them to the haunts of the Anasazi, Hopi, and Navajo. I then began taking students to Costa Rica and exploring the varied physical geography of the tropics. Muir's method had seeped into me and communicating the reasons he and I shared for appreciating nature became one of my teaching passions. I relish inducting my students into the University of the Wilderness. I challenge them to get out and read the book of Nature for what it is, a revelation of God, not a cache of natural resources. So far, the response has been as mixed as it was in Muir's day. Some people "get it", and some don't. Perhaps, as William James suggested a century ago, there really are "once-born" and "twice-born" psychologies. Still, I believe that Nature is the best place for introspection and the unexamined life is not worth living, so Muir's cry, summoning folks out into God's Wilds, continues to call out through the mouths of other criers. Thanks to a chance encounter with John Muir, I have become one of them.

New Books John Muir Would Like to Read

Deforestation and Land Use in the Amazon, edited by Charles H. Wood and Roberto Porro (University Press of Florida; 385 pages; $70 hardcover, $39.95 paperback). Research on economic, social, and biophysical factors that have contributed to deforestation in Amazonian regions of Brazil, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

The Extraordinary Adirondack Journey of Clarence Petty: Wilderness Guide, Pilot, and Conservationist, by Christopher Angus (Syracuse University Press; 288 pages; $29.95). Traces the life of the American conservationist, who has played a major role in the preservation of New York's Adirondack region.

The Politics of Western Water: The Congressional Career of Wayne Aspinall, by Stephen C. Sturgeon (University of Arizona Press; 243 pages; $45). A study of the Democratic congressman, who represented Colorado's Fourth District from 1949 to 1973; focuses on his clash with environmentalists and colleagues over key water legislation.

Ranching, Endangered Species, and Urbanization in the Southwest: Species of Capital, by Nathan F. Sayre (University of Arizona Press; 278 pages; $48). Focuses on the Buenos Aires Ranch near Sasabe, Ariz., which was converted into a national wildlife refuge to protect the masked bobwhite quail.

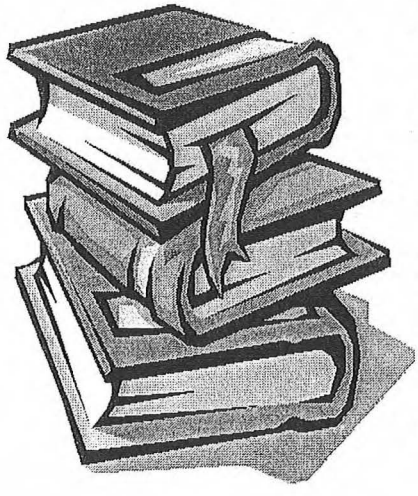
Still the Wild River Runs: Congress, The Sierra Club, and the Fight to Save Grand Canyon, by Byron E. Pearson (University of Arizona Press; 246 pages; $45). Describes a successful effort in the 1960s to block the construction of two dams in the Grand Canyon; disputes the notion that the Sierra Club had a major influence on Congress's decision to stop the project.

Water Follies: Groundwater Pumping and the Fate of America's Fresh Waters, by Robert Glennon (Island Press; 314 pages; $25). Examines the impact of the excessive pumping of American aquifers.

Economic Growth Versus the Environment: The Politics of Wealth, Health, and Air Pollution, by Judith A. Cherni (Palgrave; 235 pages; $65). Draws on a study of pollution in Houston.

Environmental Security, by Simon Dalby (University of Minnesota Press; 312 pages; $54.95 hardcover, $19.95 paperback). Discusses environmental degradation as an issue in world politics.

Acting for Endangered Species: The Statutory Ark, by Shannon C. Petersen (University Press of Kansas; 240 pages; $29.95). A legal and political history of the Endangered Species Act, which was passed by Congress in 1973; focuses on the controversies over the law's use in cases involving the snail-darter fish and dam construction and the spotted owl and logging.



Federalism in the Forest: National versus State Natural Resource Policy, by Tomas M. Koontz (Georgetown University Press; 232 pages; $24.95). Focuses on the Midwest and the Pacific Northwest in a comparative study of federal and state forest-management policies.

Saving Open Space: The Politics of Local Preservation in California, by Daniel Press (University of California Press; 197 pages; $49.95 hardcover, $18.95 paperback). Analyzes successful efforts at land preservation from the perspective of a "policy-capacity" model that evaluates a community's capacity and willingness to pursue environmentalist goals.

Environmental Peacemaking, edited by Ken Conca and Geoffrey D. Dabelko (Woodrow Wilson Center Press,, distributed by Johns Hopkins University Press; 264 pages; #35 hardcover, $17.50 paperback). Essays on environmental cooperation and its role in promoting regional peace; focuses on the Baltic, the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, Southern Africa, and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism, by Gregory A. Barton (Cambridge University Press; 208 pages; $55). Discusses the emergence of protected forest lands in mid-19th-century British India and traces the spread of the "empire forestry" movement through other imperial realms.

Benton Mackaye: Conservationist, Planner, and Creator of the Appalachian Trail, by Larry Anderson (Johns Hopkins University Press; 464 pages; $45). A biography of the American conservationist (1879-1975), who was a pioneer of the idea of linking preservation and recreation.

In the Absence of Predators: Conservation and Controversy on the Kaibab Plateau, by Christian C. Young (University of Nebraska Press; 304 pages; $49.95). Examines debates over the explosion then decline of the deer population on a site north of the Grand Canyon in the 1920s, an event initially blamed on the removal of natural predators; explores the competing interests of scientists, conservationists, hunters, government agencies, and others in the controversy and shows how accepted truths about what happened came to be understood as myths.

Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature, by Mark Daniel Barringer (University Press of Kansas; 249 pages; $29.95). Focuses on Harry W. Child's Yellowstone Park Company in a study of how concessionaires have shaped the landscapes of American national parks.

(continued from page 1)

accompanied by excessive secretions), she turned to Dr. Hamilton J. Cate who prescribed pills and urged Jackson to move to Colorado — the salubrious climate would improve her respiration.[2]

On November 17, 1872 Jackson, accompanied by Cate, moved "for the benefit of her health," first to Denver. She settled in Colorado Springs at Cate's encouragement. Initially she found accommodations on Deadman's Row (Kiowa Street--north side), a line of portable houses shipped from Chicago to accommodate the invalid population. Later she resided in the newly constructed Colorado Springs Hotel. Jackson noted that she crossed much of America — having come from Amherst, Massachusetts — to find "a climate which would not kill." As the snow began to fall in Colorado Springs, dust settled, air cleared. In the evenings Jackson opened the windows in her room and found her throat improved. Cate returned to Amherst leaving Jackson with a prescriptive diet of oatmeal gruel, gem cakes, and iron pills.[3]

When Jackson wrote to Carr and to Muir seeking cure and refreshment in the mountains, she was no stranger to the Sierra or to Yosemite Valley. On May 9, 1872, she and Sarah C. Woolsey had left the Erie Railroad Station in New York for a two months' journey to the West that included ten days in Yosemite Valley. The story of Jackson's excursion, a fertile and descriptive account of her trip and her stay at the Hutchings's Hotel, appeared in *Bits Of Travel At Home.*[4]

It was nearly ten years before Jackson returned to California. On December 20, 1881, she arrived in Los Angeles to begin a commission for *Century Magazine*, a series of articles on California missions and Indians. Wintering in California in 1882 and again in 1883 Jackson gathered material for *Ramona*. A friendship that began with Jeanne Carr in 1855, at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Providence, Rhode Island, was renewed in April 1882 in Pasadena at Carr's home, Carmelita. Thereafter Jackson often visited Carr who undoubtedly would have talked about the rewards of health and enjoyment she personally experienced in the Sierra. She also would have introduced Jackson to the writings of John Muir.[5]

In June, 1884, Jackson fell while at her Colorado home. A comminuted compound fracture to her left leg resulted in a period of recuperation over the winter months in a Los Angeles boarding house where she remained confined by exercise that inflamed her right hip. For the duration of her life she would be an invalid. Fearful of what she thought was malarial fever contracted from defective plumbing in the boarding house and plagued by persistent fever and nausea and unable to eat, Jackson left Los Angeles for San Francisco in March, 1885, seeking *"better* [homeopathic] medical care and more comfort". At some point while still in Los Angeles, Jackson wrote to Carr in a feeble trembling hand. Though weak, she was exceedingly comfortable. "The blessed rains have washed out the sewers!" she wrote. In San Francisco, Jackson sought the medical expertise of Dr. A. T. Boericke, a young European-trained homeopath. Boericke advised that she abandon all reading and writing. He prescribed pills.[6]

The homeopathic therapeutics brought Jackson no relief. Early in June 1885 she remembered the grandeur of the Sierra, Yosemite Valley, and Mt. Shasta. She thought about clear, clean, pine-scented mountain air, about sleeping out under stars. She urged Dr. Boericke to permit her a camping trip. If the experiment did not kill her, she was convinced she would be cured. Along a mountain stream and under the spray of a waterfall she would grow strong and fully recover, so she sought a wilderness cure. Roused by the tonic influence of earth and air, she would awaken in new vitality; morbid feelings and conditions would wear away. On June 8 Jackson wrote to Carr.

Dear Mrs. Carr

It begins to look as if I should have to crawl back again. It is a pity. I would much rather have died--living in a patched up body is not worth while. I can sit up, now, ten minutes and take teaspoonfuls of food--the doctors are delighted!To me it is the most tragic of all situations. Still if I must live, I propose to make all the fight I can to get back my vitality. There have been no positive malarial symptoms for weeks--only nervous prostration. . .all food impossible.

How close the analogy between financial and bodily troubles. There is a run on a bank, every neighbor hurries in with his account to be paid. You get a run on your physical bank--malaria for instance--up steps nature with a thirty year nerve bill which you can't pay and it breaks your Bank. I look to come out about 30 cents on the dollar! This letter to John Muir will tell my plans. Can you write him? Can you suggest anything?

Oh if I could but get to a country where it would rain! But that is out of the question. I have been dying for want of rain ever since last September first in Colorado then in Los Angeles and since then, here. Deliver me from rainless countries!

I wanted to get up to the Shasta region, but the long journey through the heat and dust would kill me. I would like to lie in the fine spray of a waterfall for days. I long for rain so that I dream of it and the sound of it haunts me by day.

Yours ever
H. J.[7]

Jackson wanted Carr to help her obtain from Muir advice on regions and climatology. His experience and knowledge would serve as her guide. She was prepared to depart in six weeks. Without hesitation, Jackson wrote directly to Muir, whom she had never met.

My dear Mr. Muir

I want some help from you. I have been terribly ill for four months, severe malarial poisoning contracted in Los Angeles. The doctors say that in six weeks I may be strong enough to be laid on a bed in a wagon and drawn about. I know, with the certainty of instinct, that nothing except three months out of doors night and day will get this poison out of my veins. I want to get where it is cool, and moist, and among trees.

I cannot endure heat. I cannot bear a high altitude--nothing over 4000 feet. The best I can hear of is to be taken by train to the Sierra foothills, say the Dutchman's Flat [Placer County] region, and work up towards Truckee. Can you suggest anything better? or more? I want to keep moving. I cannot go away from Wells Fargo posts. I must have even more than comfortable fare.

I have the fortune to know an old guide and camper who will conduct my train and has made estimates for me. I must have eight horses, four vehicles--an ambulance for me in bed, two camp wagons for tents, and a comfortable phaeton buggy--four servants, myself, maid, and doctor.

Now do you know any good itinerary for such a cumbrous caravan as this? How you would scorn such lumbering methods! I am too ill to wish any other. I shall do this as a gamester throws his last card!

I have always hoped I should see you. I believe I know every word you have written. I never wished myself a man but once--that was when I read how it seemed to be rocked in the top of a pine tree in a gale.

Yours truly
Helen Jackson

Jackson had read Muir's account of his journey in a Douglas spruce published in *Scribner's Magazine*. While visiting Emily Pelton in Brownsville (Knoxville), California, in December, 1874, he followed a storm to a tributary valley of the Yuba River and scrambled through corpses of fallen Hazel and *Ceanothus*. With iron-spiked shoes, Muir climbed to the top of a 100 foot tall Douglas spruce in a heavy gale and remained perched swirling and waving — forward and backward, round and round, vertically then horizontally — in wild sweeps. Clinging to the wind, Muir closed his eyes to enjoy the music, to breath deep the spiced fragrance of balsamic buds and rosiny branches. Burdened with custom and culture, as well as poor health, Jackson would never own Muir's corporeal experience. With a wish to be physically locked in nature's embrace, with disregard for culture's orthodoxy that belonged to Muir, Jackson acknowledged the reward of being male. Might she gaze into the eyes of the adventure seeker and glean something of the experience.[8]

Carr immediately responded to Jackson's letter; but rather than to Muir she wrote to John Strentzel.

Dear JS

The enclosed letter will explain itself. Mrs. Jackson is one of our most gifted women and authors but as crotchety as it is the privilege of genius to be. She broke her leg early in the fall, a comminuted compound fracture and came for the third time to Los Angeles to winter.

She lived in a crowded boarding house with bad sewage, and taking little bodily exercise, was soon poisoned. She has fallen into the hands of a vanity of homeopaths who make a good thing of it, I fancy.

I thought our friend John would laugh one of his awful laughs at this "innocent abroad" who expects to get to the "Dutchman's flat" by train and thence keep moving for three months where it is cool and moist and not over 4000 ft high. Maybe John will remember a region back of Visalia which would meet her requirements. I have told her in my reply to her letter that I would ask you to call on her at 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco. I have also told her how you travelled once with the dear mother and saved her all these blessed years.

I think she would be grateful for a word from you, and she is well worth saving. And I love you all as I climb toward the hills when we

shall have plenty of time to say what is in our hearts.

Jeanne Carr[9]

Jackson was nettled by Carr's quick response. She was not giving up her plan to retreat to someplace completely wild, fresh, and free. Carr failed to see that the wildness of the camping trip offered hope to Jackson's. She viewed Jackson's scheme as pure drama. She also understood Muir as well as anyone was able. He would not condone such an extravagant unnatural excursion party. Carr proffered a sober alternative excursion to be led by her son Al into the San Gabriel Valley. Jackson rejected it.

Dear Mrs. Carr

Your letter made me laugh (a good deal!) So characteristic of you and yet you ought to be human botanist as well as field botanist, enough to know that each creature has laws of habitat and condition it cannot disregard.

Camping such as you propose "with only Al and the light wagon" would be to me, at any time in my robustest state, simply detestable! I abhor everything about it. I can't eat canned corned beef by which I mean 500 other canned abominations. I can't abide dirt disorder irregularities of hours, discomfort? I cannot keep well — never could — under unfavoring conditions in these regards even in well built houses!

I have seen a great deal of camping and camp life in Colorado--have spent many a day in the camps of friends who thought themselves comfortable. I have always abhorred it! I have said, I suppose a thousand times, that I'd never be "hired to do it!" Neither would I — now — except as a medicine.

The being drawn slowly along on my bed — in open air — will do me good. Seeing pine trees, and if the Lord wills, a tumbling brook, will do me good. Everything which aims to break the monotony of my weary consciousness of the back of my head and the nape of my neck, and all the other million discomforts of cerebral exhaustion, will do me good.

If I can have good food and reasonable comfort in my tent at night I can endure it — not otherwise. Of course I did not propose to drag through the Sacramento Valley in wagons. I shall take my whole train by rail to some point 2000 feet or so high and then start. If I do it at all that is what I shall do. But as I cannot yet sit up half an hour or talk one with any person making any draft on me or read continuously, without being much worse the next day, it does not look quite like setting off on a camping tour.

All I wanted of Muir was hints as to regions where moisture and shade will be got. As for your San Gabriel Valley in midsummer — asking your pardon my dear friend, I'd as soon go to Sahara! I know what it is. The heat of the last two days I spent there half killed me! I simply can't bear heat and dry heat is to me like a pestilence in my veins. The thing which is saving me here if I am being saved is that it is cool. I need a little fire to keep the temperature where I require it, 68 degrees — much above or below that, I suffer.

Yours ever
H. J.

Mr. Jackson and I went all through the Puget Sound region up to Victoria, two years ago — a superb trip for a well person.

The ability to sleep on the ground in a blanket, "to possess the heavens and the earth and all that in them is," were qualities Carr possessed and Jackson admired. With wagons, tents, mattresses, and a good cook, she was a "blind beggar" in comparison to Carr's *freehold estate.* But she was certain that she was not to be outdone in love — "nature never repels a sincere adorer — even if he comes on crutches and with a cook to feed him by the way."[10]

On June 16 an empathetic Muir, who had endured malarial fever in 1867 while traveling in Florida, during his walk to the Gulf of Mexico, wrote a kindly informative letter to Jackson.

My dear Mrs. Jackson

Your letter of June 8th has shown me how sick you are, but also that your good angel is guiding you to the mountains, and therefore I feel sure that you will soon be well again.

When I came to California from the swamps of Florida, full of malarial poison, I crawled up the mountains over the snow into the blessed woods about Yosemite Valley, and the exquisite pleasure of convalescence and exuberant rebound to perfect health that came to me at once seem still as fresh and vivid after all these years as if enjoyed but yesterday.

The conditions for Jackson's itinerary seemed forbidding to Muir, her retinue ominous. He wondered with such an outfit what Douglas Squirrel would say at the sight? The winds might hold their breath, the pines groan at the visage of shining cans, carriages, and colors. Even bears would scatter. Muir described elevations and ranges of forest and moisture through the Sierra, Mt. Shasta, the Coast Range,

and Mendocino. Despite his reservations, he suggested that Jackson,

> *go to the mountains where and how you will* [for] *you soon will be free from the effects of this confusion, and God's sky will bend down about you as if made for you alone, and the pines will spread their healing arms above you and bless you and make you well again, and so delight the heart of J. M.*[11]

On June 20 Jackson wrote to Muir. Serenity, coolness, and above all moisture were the goals of her expedition, disbelief, ridicule, spokes, pans, a cook, and a doctor, the price of salvation. If nothing came of her plan at least she had the pleasure of his kind letter and the assurance that she had triumphed over Jeanne Carr.

Dear Mr. Muir

If nothing else comes of my camping air castle, I have had at least one pleasure from it —your kind and delightful letter. I have read it so many times I half know it. I wish Mrs. Carr were here that I might triumph over her. She wrote me that I might "as well ask one of the angels of Heaven, as John Muir" "so entirely out of his line" was the thing I proposed to do. I knew better, however, and I was right. You are the only man in California who could tell me just what I needed to know about ranges of climate, dryness, heat, etc., also roads.

You have already ruled out my first plan —i.e. the skirmishing along the middle Sierra foothills. I am drawn towards Truckee and the Lake Tahoe region by what you say, but I fear that altitude. It is of the too little oxygen and the nerve strain of 6000 ft. up in my Colorado home that I have been breaking down for years, getting ready for this attack.

Now, tell me a little more in detail about the Shasta region and the redwood district in the Coast Range. Of the latter I know nothing.

For your better convenience I will make a memorandum on a separate sheet of the points I need to know.

I am nothing angered or astonished at your sarcastic phrases about my "spokes and spooks," and "wheels and pans." I only wonder at your gentleness, confronted by an array so repugnant to you. I trust you may never have to be so dependent —perhaps you do not know that last year I broke my leg? and have not for ten months stepped without crutches —this in addition to the utter exhaustion of the eighteen weeks' illness, makes me helpless indeed. If you had got to go into the woods, flat on your back on a bed in an ambulance, or not at all, wouldn't you take kindly to "spokes?," and if your life (apparently) depended on strong broths and gruels, wouldn't you take along a good cook and his "pans?" If you were to see me you would only wonder that I have courage to even dream of such an expedition. I am not at all sure it is not of the madness which the god's are said to send on those whom they wish to destroy.

They tell me Martinez is only twenty miles away. Do you never come into town? The regret I should weakly feel at having you see the "remains" (ghastly but inimitable word) of me, would, I think, be small in comparison with the pleasure I should feel in seeing you. I am much too weak to see strangers —but it is long since you were a stranger.

Yours sincerely,
Helen Jackson

Jackson's appended list follows:

1st —the redwood region of the Coast Range — what elevations could I hit there, combined with moisture and forests? How much moisture? waterfalls? streams? How long a range would I have? I want to keep moving: go over as much ground as possible, not over two days or one in any place. Can you suggest places or routes, for this region? Would I have to begin the journey by rail? or could I start from this door on my bed?

2nd —the Shasta region. How many hours from here by rail to Redding? Do they have Pullman sleepers on that road? You say from Redding to Strawberry Valley is an "easy grade, some fifty miles." What would that fifty miles be like? hot? dusty? It would mean three days journey for me. The horses will have to walk. And Strawberry Valley (delicious name) —when I reach that am I among forests and streams? The "hundred mile orbit around Shasta," is that plains or foothills? I have fancied Shasta arising sharply like a pyramid from a plain.

Can you give me a list of points, roads, places in this "orbit?," bearing in mind always that what I most need is moisture, what I simply cannot endure is dry heat; dust also is dangerous to me —a forest, and a dashing stream are my needs.

3rd —the Lake Region. Why do you call that "moist and leafy?" I was there at the Tahoe House once, a week —it was glorious but it was dry and no trees but thin pines as I

recollect. The sun blazed like Sahara, every day. We did not explore, only rowed on the lake. It was fourteen years ago. Are there roads all round the lake? Would the prevailing altitude be 6000 ft?

Camping was her dream but Nature's time was not to be ordered, no matter how much the ubiquitous and recalcitrant Jackson tried. On June 24 she wrote to Carr. She reported that she suffered an ugly setback and her patience was worse. Her doctor thought there was no chance of her being strong enough to leave on a camping journey by the first of August — "that means no chance of going at all. If only it were the middle of May instead of June. I might hope for it." The season would pass. Jackson's hope had provided courage in her despair — an idea of wilderness to ponder, a place to rest her mind and body if only but a memory; if dreams could heal.[12]

On August 11 rather than John Strentzel, John Muir stood outside Jackson's residence at 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco. He knew the neighborhood well. He had often stayed with the John Swett Family at 1419 Taylor Street. From Alameda, he wrote to his wife, Louie, that Mrs. Jackson must have gone away. There was no response to his ringing at her door. The blinds were down. On August 12 with her husband, William S. Jackson, by her side, Jackson died of cancer.[13]

Carr's tribute noted that "in nature alone [Jackson] found help and healing, an infinite longing possessed her for a deeper intimacy with the soul of nature." Carr was kind. Jackson was more culture than nature. Carr had seen no trace of the enlargement of spiritual vision that came with communion with the soul of Nature. "It was through Humanity that Jackson's baptism came." [14] Nature, however, opened for her a venue to the vernacular world of reform — she had veered from the Protestant faith of her childhood. She most valued her writing about the Ponca Indians of Nebraska and the Mission Indians of southern California. She regretted dying without having accomplished more.

There was one final poem. On August 8, four days before her death, perhaps Jackson was not so distant from the faith that sustained her as a child.

Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun;

So clear I see that things I thought
Were right or harmless were a sin;
So clear I see that I have sought,
Unconscious, selfish aims to win:

So clear I see that I have hurt
The souls I might have helped to save,
That I have slothful been, inert,
Deaf to the calls thy leaders gave.

In outskirts of thy kingdoms vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me;
Set me the lowliest task thou hast,
let me repentant work for thee! [15]

ENDNOTES

1. Helen Hunt Jackson, *A Century of Dishonor: A Sketch of the United States Government's Dealings with Some of the Indian Tribes* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881). Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona: A Story* (*Christian Union*, 1884; Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885). *Ramona* was written to publicize the plight of Indians in southern California. See "Mrs. Helen Jackson ('H. H.')," *Century Magazine* 31 (December 1885): 251-259. Jeanne Carr wrote about the Indian basket culture see Jeanne C. Carr, "The Blessed Cora of San Luis Rey," *California* 1 (October 1891): 61-71; Jeanne C. Carr, "Among the Basket Makers," *Californian* 2 (October 1892): 597-610. For Jackson's essay on her friend Jeanne Carr, see "One Woman and Sunshine," c. 1880, Helen Hunt Jackson Papers, HM11908, Huntington Library. Homeopathy was introduced in the United States in 1825. For information on homeopathy see Robert C. Fuller, *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22-26; William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1872), 152-161; Martin Kaufman, *Homeopathy in America: The Rise and Fall of a Medical Heresy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971). For information on the healthful benefits of wilderness see Marc Cook, *The Wilderness Cure* (New York: William Wood and Co., 1881); James J. Levick, "The Adirondacks," *Philadelphia Medical Times* (September 24, 1881); Billy M. Jones, *Health-Seekers in the Southwest, 1817-1900* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967). Charles Warren Stoddard, "Alma Natura," *The Overland Monthly* 6 (June 1871): 541.

2. Antoinette May, *Helen Hunt Jackson: A Lonely Voice of Conscience* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1987), 40-41. See also Valerie Sherer Mathes, *Helen Hunt Jackson and Her Indian Reform Legacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

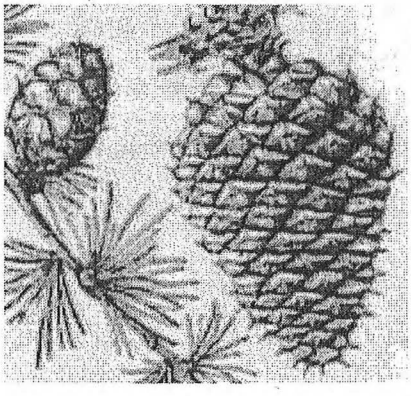
3. For information on Colorado and the restorative qualities of its climate, see Charles Denison, *Rocky Mountain Health Resorts* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1881), 161-162. Evelyn I. Banning, *Helen Hunt Jackson* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1973), 100-104. May, 40-41.

4. Banning, 162-163, 175-176, 219. See Helen Hunt Jackson, *Bits Of Travel At Home* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878), 87-147. See also Helen Hunt Jackson, *Bits Of Travel* (James R. Osgood & Co., 1873).

5. See Jeanne C. Carr, "Recollections of Helen Hunt Jackson; and the Genesis of the Novel, *Ramona*," c. 1880s, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, CA44, Huntington Library. For Jeanne Carr's experience in the Sierra and in Yosemite Valley with John Muir, Albert Kellogg, and William Keith in 1873 see Jeanne C. Carr, "Mrs. Carr's Remarks on the Big Tuolumne Canon, Etc., [Before the Oakland Farming Club, Oct. 10th]," *Pacific Rural Press* (San Francisco), October 25, 1873.

6. May, 124. Banning, 218-219. Jeanne C. Carr, "Helen Hunt Jackson," *Woman's Journal*, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, Scrapbook I, annexed between pages 80 and 81, Huntington Library. A comminuted compound fracture would have shattered the bones in Jackson's leg into small fragments. Helen Hunt Jackson to Jeanne C. Carr, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, n.d., Huntington Library. For information on the healthful and restorative qualities of life in California see Charles Nordhoff, *California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1872); Benjamin C. Truman, *Semi-Tropical California: Its Climate, Healthfulness, Productiveness, and Scenery; Its Magnificent Stretches of Vineyards and Groves of Semi-Tropical Fruits, Etc., Etc., Etc.* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Co., 1874); Isaac Mast, *The Gun, Rod, and Saddle; or, Nine Months In California* (Philadelphia: Methodist Episcopal Book and Publishing House, 1875); Theodore S. Van Dyke, *Flirtation Camp: or, The Rifle, Rod, and Gun in California, A Sporting Romance* (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, 1881); Newton H. Chittenden, *Health Seekers, Tourists' and Sportsmen's Guide to the Health and Pleasure Resorts of the Pacific Coast* (San Francisco: E. A. Murdock and Co., 1884).

7. Banning, 219. Denison,165. According to homeopathic therapeutics, at the time, no remedies existed *yet* for cancer. The individuality of the patient, the cause of the affection, and the concomitant symptoms aided in the selection of a remedy that was intended to alleviate suffering. S. Lilienthal, *Homeopathic Therapeutics* (New York: Boericke and Tafel, 1878), 79. May, 127. For information on the restorative powers of camping see "The Tent under the Beech," *Scribner's Monthly* 8 (1874): 498; "Camping Out," *Scribner's Monthly* 10 (1875): 245; Theodore Winthrop, *Life in the Open Air and Other Papers* (New York: John W. Lovell Co., 1862). Helen Hunt Jackson to Jeanne C. Carr, 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco, June 8, 1885, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, CA195, Huntington Library.



8. Helen Hunt Jackson to John Muir, 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco, June 8, 1885, John Muir Papers (JMP), Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Libraries, Copyright 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust, A5:02702. A phaeton buggy was a light four-wheeled carriage with or without a top, having one or two seats facing forward. John Muir, "A Wind Storm in the Forests of the Yuba," *Scribner's Monthly* 17 (November 1878): 55-59; John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: The Century Co., 1894), 244-257. Douglas spruce (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Hazel (*Corylus*), deciduous tree or large shrub, best known for edible nuts, toothed leaves, strongly veined, with male and female flowers on the same plant (male, pendulous catkins; female, small greenish clusters at branch tips that develop into distinctive nuts that ripen in summer). *Ceanothus* (Buckthorn Family: Rhamnaceae), primarily a shrub. California has more than forty species, about ten in the Sierra.

9. Jeanne C. Carr to John Strentzel, Carmelita, June 11, 1885, JMP, B5:02705.

10. Helen Hunt Jackson to Jeanne C. Carr, 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco, June 14, 1885, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, CA196, Huntington Library.

11. See John Muir, *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916). John Muir to Helen Hunt Jackson, Martinez, June 16, 1885, JMP, A5:02713.

12. Helen Hunt Jackson to John Muir, 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco, June 20, 1885, JMP, A5:02718. Helen Hunt Jackson to Jeanne C. Carr, 1600 Taylor Street, San Francisco, June 24, 1885, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, CA197, Huntington Library. For information on mountains and the sublime, see Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959; reprint, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); Laura Waterman and Guy Waterman, *Forest and Crag* (Boston: Appalachian Mountain Club, 1989).

13. John Muir to Louie Wanda Strentzel Muir, Aladema, August 11, 1885, JMP, A5:02742. William S. Jackson to Mrs. E. C. Banfield (Helen's sister), August 12, 1885, Jackson Family Papers (Part I, Box 1, fd. 5), Charles Leaming Trust Library. For the obituary of Helen Hunt Jackson see the *San Francisco Morning Call*, August 12, 1885, p. 13.

14. Carr, "Helen Hunt Jackson," *Woman's Journal*, Jeanne C. Carr Papers, Scrapbook I, Huntington Library. Carr, "Recollections of Helen Hunt Jackson; and the Genesis of the Novel, *Ramona*," Jeanne C. Carr Papers, CA44, Huntington Library. Jackson's parents, Nathan Welby and Deborah (Vinal) Fiske, were strict Calvinists. Helen Maria Fiske Hunt Jackson had been born in Amherst, Massachusetts on October 18, 1831. She died at the age of fifty-three. Her father, a graduate of Dartmouth College, was a professor of mathematics at Middlebury College and then professor of language and philosophy at Amherst College and a Congregational minister. Ruth Odell, *Helen Hunt Jackson: (H. H.)* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1939), 117. Banning, 224. "Mrs. Helen Jackson ('H. H.'),"

15. *Century Magazine* (December 1885): 259.

(Photograph of Helen Hunt Jackson on page 5 courtesy of The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens)

Letters To The Editor

While reading the Spring 2002 John Muir Newsletter, I was surprised by some words by Mikel Vause in his "The Evolution of John Muir: Scientist and Mystic" article.

> After a short stay in New York as a guest on board of a small Dutch schooner recuperating from the fever he caught in Cuba, he chose to go to California in hopes of regaining his health. Upon leaving New York, Muir travels around Cape Horn sailing past the same territory that so captured the attention of Charles Darwin arriving in San Francisco, on March 28, 1868.

Excerpts from my copy of Muir's *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* reveals the facts above to be different from those stated by John Muir.

While near Cedar Keys, Florida, awaiting a lumber ship to Galveston, Texas, John became ill with malarial fever. . ." I was nursed about three months with unfailing kindness, and to the skill and care of Mr. And Mrs. Hodgson I doubtless owe my life." (p. 129)

"Feeling a bit stronger he sailed in January, 1868 on the lumber ship Island Belle to Havana." But alas! Though out of Florida swamps, fever was yet weighing me down, and a mile of city walking was quite exhausting." (p. 150) . . . "my weakness prevented me from spending a single night ashore" (p. 151). John had caught the fever in Florida several months before he arrived in Cuba.

"Fortunately . . . I could not find a vessel of any sort bound for South America, and so made a plan to go North, to the longed-for cold weather of New York, and thence to the forests and mountains of California." (p. 170). His decision to go to California was made in Cuba, well before he got to New York.

To get from New York to California, John sailed aboard the ship *Nebraska* to Panama, which he crossed to reach the Pacific Ocean. "The day before the sailing of the Panama ship . . . " (p. 182) "Arrived at Aspenwall-Colon, we had a half a day to ramble about before starting across the Isthmus. Never shall I forget the glorious flora, especially for the first fifteen or twenty miles along the Chagres River," (p. 187). The Chagres River heads inland westward across Panama.

Perhaps author Mikel Vause created his imaginary route for John Muir around Cape Horn so he could drop the name of Charles Darwin into his article, "The Evolution of John Muir: Scientist and Mystic," but I think both Charles and John would be saddened by the lack of accuracy in the facts related and reported. Perhaps, sometime, the article's author could read Muir's *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf* which was used to lengthily fill his article with quotes from!

Don Beattie, John Muir Author

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From Mike Vause, Weber State University

I made a mistake and I stand corrected. It's been a while since I've read "1000 Mile Walk..." and for some reason I mixed up Muir's route to California with that of someone else. I've since re-read it and found it again delightful. So if for no other reason than forcing me back into Muir I appreciate his careful criticism. . . . No excuse is a good one for such a mistake, but if you'll indulge me, I must have read hundreds of books on exploration, naturalism, and history since the last time I looked at Muir in any depth. I should have checked my transition to which Mr. Beattie alludes before I sent it off. But I'm certainly no different than most everyone else, I have too much to do (or I try to do too much) and no time to do it.

All the best, Mike

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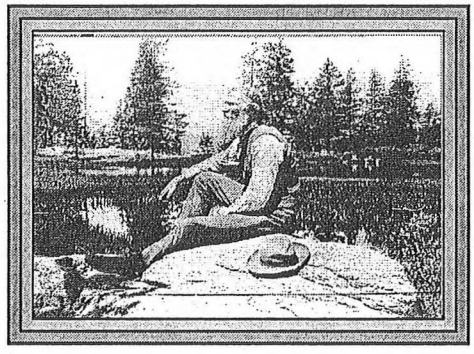

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